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REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS TWENTY-NINTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: G. M. CHARUMBIRA (Botswana)

Chapter _____

CRITICAL PROBLEMS IN ECONOMIC STATISTICS

(Agenda item 3)

1. The Commission considered item 3 of its agenda at the 485th and 486th meetings, on 12 February 1997. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Expert Group on Critical Problems in Economic Statistics (E/CN.3/1997/2, annex);

(b) Reports on selected critical problems in economic statistics (E/CN.3/1997/3 and Add.1);

(c) Background document on informal sector statistics prepared by the Department of Statistics, India.

Action taken by the Commission

2. The Commission:

(a) Welcomed the offer of the Czech Republic to cooperate with a number of countries and to host a meeting on the topic of best practices for official statistics. The group might want to consider formulating a draft code of best

practices to be presented to the Commission's Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination in 1998;

(b) Took note of the efforts undertaken by Canada and the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) to address the issue of globalization;

(c) Agreed with the proposed work programme set forth by the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, provided that existing international standards (for example labour statistics, System of National Accounts, 1993 (SNA)[1]) were adequately taken into account;

(d) Took note of the programme of the expert group meeting on capital stock statistics to be organized by the Australian Bureau of Statistics;

(e) Also took note of the proposed future work programme on resources accounting of the London Group on Resource Accounting. It encouraged the London Group to incorporate the views and experiences of developing countries into its deliberations;

(f) Agreed that the issue of measuring prices was a particularly important one. It furthermore agreed with the work programme proposed by the Ottawa Group on Consumer Price Statistics;

(g) Endorsed the efforts of the Voorburg Group on Service Statistics to address the issue of quality of labour;

(h) Took note of the creation of the Paris Group on the topic of labour and compensation, thus merging the efforts of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the institut national de la statistique et des études economiques (INSEE) in that field of statistics;

(i) Also took note of the initiative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to define the scope of the issue of the economics of intangibles, suggesting therewith that a solution to the emerging problems be sought first within established economic statistics frameworks;

(j) Agreed on the need to conduct an evaluation of the global International Comparison Programme (ICP) to address the reservations by member States about the implementation of the Programme, and the uses of ICP results and to seek ways to improve the credibility of ICP data. It noted that the timing of an evaluation was appropriate since regional and global results of the current round would become available by the end of 1997;

(k) Appointed a steering committee to supervise the review process. It accepted the following volunteers to serve on the committee: Australia, Canada, India, the United States of America, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Russian Federation, the World Bank and the United Nations Statistics Division;

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[1] United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.XVII.4.

(l) Suggested that the steering committee review the terms of reference for the evaluation of the global ICP contained in the annex to document E/CN.3/1997/3/Add.1 in order to take into account the very special problems in respect of making comparisons between highly developed and developing countries (such as the representativeness and the characteristicness of the items chosen);

(m) Took note of the work of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the elaboration of standards for economic, financial and labour statistics;

(n) Encouraged the groups to incorporate in their discussions a wide spectrum of country experiences and to disseminate the results of their deliberations. Conveners of meetings were asked to prepare summary reports and to make the meeting documents available via an Internet bulletin board. In this context, the Commission also took note of the offer of the United Nations Statistics Division to distribute material received by the groups to national statistical agencies and to establish, on the UNSD home page, links to the groups' various bulletin boards;

(o) Requested the various groups and conveners of meetings to provide the Working Group on International Statistical Programmes and Coordination with status reports that described as clearly as possible the problem to be addressed and the output to be expected.